



Local Farmland Expropriations Causing Industry-wide Instability, Warns Wilmot Farmer

March 28, 2024

For Immediate Release

Over the past few weeks, a devastating, destructive plan has come to light in our community.

More than 700 acres of precious farmland in New Hamburg – less than two kilometers from Pfenning's Organic Vegetables Inc's base of operations – is being acquired and rezoned for industrial use.

Our family has invested everything we have in this community.

The Pfenning family came to Canada over 40 years ago after their land, where they had lived and farmed for nearly 400 years, was expropriated by the German government to build a bridge.

Pfenning's Organic Vegetables Inc, which began as a single-family farm, has grown over the past four decades to also become a distributor for other Ontario organic farms.

We import off-season and tropical foods, and we provide employment to over 100 people locally, with a further 40 seasonal workers coming from Jamaica.

Looking around this township and region, it sometimes feels as if we have an abundance of farmland, so we don't always think about the need to preserve it. There's an interesting parallel between the acreage *we* grow and what is currently being threatened with expropriation: It is nearly the same number of acres.

What does that mean to our food supply?

Our farm feeds thousands of people just with what we grow. Best known for our carrots, we consistently produce over 2 million pounds per year, which is around 100 to 120 acres of carrots. (Our biggest ever annual yield was 2.6 million pounds.) At an average consumption of 17 lbs per person, per year, we feed well over 100,000 people with our carrots. Put in context, that doesn't even supply enough for our region. We also grow a variety of other root vegetables, leafy greens, and other cooking vegetables.

This land feeds and employs our community. It feeds people *beyond* our community.

Waterloo Region has been a secure and stable place to farm because of the vigorously defended Countryside Line, which has been in place for over 50 years. Now, that sense of security is gone.

Without action today to stop the catastrophic development of farmland, Wilmot will become an *industrial* community instead of a *farming* one. The cities of our region will lose food security, as food will no longer be coming from the surrounding fields once they are paved over.

We will trade the thousands of acres that feed people for air pollution, degraded water quality, and jobs whose profits feed corporations who care nothing for the people who once lived here.

The uncertainty felt by our family is being replicated across the township, across the region, and across the province, on other farms. Why would someone invest further in their farm if it can be taken away on a whim? Businesses that have passed through generations will no longer exist, and a way of life will be lost forever.

Development on this scale does not stop with one block of land. Once these farms are lost to industry, others will follow.

With the Countryside Line breached, none of our farms are safe.

– 30 –

Contact Details

Jenn Pfenning

Pfenning's Organic Vegetables Inc

519-662-3468

marketing@pfenningsfarms.ca